

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

Your Eminence Cardinal Burke, my Lord Bishops, reverend Fathers, religious brothers and sisters, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The title of this conference comes from Psalm 11 Verse 3

“if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do”?

At a time when there seems to be a great and continual attack on the foundations of our sanctity, on the Catholic Church, on the Mass of ages, on Catholic Education and on the Catholic Family, what can the righteous do? It's an interesting question.

Perhaps we should also ask “what must the righteous do?”

I recently gave a talk at a Human Life International conference on the history of Contraception in Ireland and on the sad response of the Irish Hierarchy to this problem and in my talk I recalled a climb of Croagh Patrick that I made with Patrick McCrystal and 23 other men in August of this year. A climb of reparation for our own sins, for the sins of men in general, and for we men's failure to protect our women and our children.

On the way back down this year, I had a little insight which is very relevant to life in the church today.

The mist was quite heavy as I began my descent and at times you could barely see ten feet in front of you. People ahead looked like moving shadows. The thought struck me that it would be quite easy to get lost in the mist. You couldn't really see where you were going, the destination was lost to sight, you couldn't see down the mountain, and then it struck me. You must follow closely the path just visible ahead. But what is the path? The path is the way of those who have gone before us and have reached the destination.

I realised that this is also the way for Catholics in these times when the mists of confusion swirl all around us.

I once began writing a poem on this theme, I only got as far as the opening stanza. Its called Wisdom

Wisdom, like the early rising sun that scales the morn,
Dispels the mists that hide the mountain's rugged form.
And Truth, like misted mountain, from unwise men lies hidden
'til Wisdom comes in gold array, and Truth is softly bidden

We too must follow the path of those who have gone before us and this path goes under the name of Catholic Tradition & Catholic Historical Teaching.

One of the things I have noticed on my own journey from baptized Catholic, to the abandonment of the faith in my late teens and not going to Mass or confession for years, and thanks be to God, to my return to the faith about two years before I got married, is a particular insistence, amongst certain Catholics, on the Second Vatican Council and what it 'supposedly' taught. Last year, I began a course on Marriage and Family Evangelisation with a 'renowned' Catholic institute, and I began to notice certain things that did not sit well with me. They stated that the second Vatican council gave us a 'new description' of marriage! They also taught us, and I quote, “In summary, the Church now speaks of two purposes of Christian marriage: the love between the spouses and their openness to create and educate new life. It is a both/and notion. Neither is given priority over the other.” **unquote**

This directly contradicts what Pope Pius XII taught, in his address to midwives of October 29th 1951. Pope Pius XII said,

“Now, the truth is that matrimony, as an institution of nature, in virtue of the Creator's will, has not as a primary and intimate end the personal perfection of the married couple but the procreation and upbringing of a new life. The other ends, inasmuch as they are intended by nature, are not equally primary, much less superior to the primary end, but are essentially subordinated to it. This is true of every marriage, even if no offspring result, just as of every eye it can be said that it is destined and formed to see, even if, in abnormal cases arising from special internal or external conditions, it will never be possible to achieve visual perception.” **unquote**

So here Pope Pius XII teaches us about the primary end of marriage which is children. This foundation, that the primary end of marriage is children, has been under fierce attack for quite some time, and Pope Pius XII continued.

“It was precisely to end the uncertainties and deviations which threatened to diffuse errors regarding the scale of values of the purposes of matrimony and of their reciprocal relations, that a few years ago (March 10, 1944), We Ourselves drew up a declaration on the order of those ends, pointing out what the very internal structure of the natural disposition reveals. We showed what has been handed down by Christian tradition, what the Supreme Pontiffs have repeatedly taught, and what was then in due measure promulgated by the Code of Canon Law. Not long afterwards, to correct opposing opinions, the Holy See, by a public decree, proclaimed that it could not admit the opinion of some recent authors who denied that the primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of the offspring, or teach that the secondary ends are not essentially subordinated to the primary end, but are on an equal footing and independent of it.”
unquote.

When the Pope mentions what has been handed down by Christian tradition and what has been repeatedly taught by Supreme Pontiffs he is pointing to the infallible nature of the teaching. It cannot change.

As I just mentioned, 64 years after this papal statement, in 2015, just last year, a 'reputable' Catholic institute was bold enough to contradict what Pope Pius XII told us was handed down by Christian tradition, repeatedly taught by the Supreme Pontiffs, promulgated by the Code of Canon Law and confirmed by a public decree of the Holy See which was issued in order to correct just such opposing opinions as were taught on this course.

When I pointed this out in my essay for the course, I was given zero marks and told that I would have to rewrite my essay. The course director in an e-mail said to me **quote** “You are perfectly entitled to your own views and opinions but this course is preparing students to engage in the Church's mission of evangelisation and ministry so it necessary for us to see evidence they can faithfully 'echo' the faith of the Church.” **unquote**

I was upholding what Pope Pius XII tells us was handed down by sacred tradition and repeatedly taught by the Supreme Pontiffs of the Church and yet this was dismissed as being my own views and opinions and as not faithfully echoing the faith of the Church. Needless to say, I didn't re-write my essay and I dropped out of the course.

Remember that this was done on a course promoted in Ireland, and aimed at training lay people to Evangelise families.

People so trained will be spreading error and will ultimately harm the families who listen to them and who follow their advice. I tell you this so that you will be aware of, and awake to, what is currently going on, ***within the Catholic Church and in this case with the approval of the local bishop where this college is situated.*** They are destroying the foundations.

A few weeks ago, someone invited me to attend a day for catechesis in Knock organised by the Irish Bishop's Council for Catechesis. I couldn't attend, but I had to meet a priest there to deliver something to him. In the course of our conversation I was telling him what I have just told you about the course from last year. He asked me the name of the course director and when I told him, he informed that the very same course director was giving a keynote address in Knock that very day.

They are destroying the foundations and from within the Catholic Church.

A simple mathematical equation will help you to keep the Second Vatican Council in perspective. We are in the year 2016, that's two thousand and sixteen years since the birth of Christ. If Christ lived for 33 years then the Catholic Church has existed for 1983 years. 2016 less 33. The second Vatican council began on 11th October 1962, the year that I was born. We are now in 2016 which is fifty four years since the council.

Fifty four years, represents just under 3% of Catholic Church history. Or, if we invert the figures, we will find that just over 97% of Catholic Church history and teaching took place before the second Vatican council. Over 97%! This is not to deny anything of the Second Vatican Council but simply to put it into perspective from the point of view of Church history and teaching.

What was true before the council, remains true after the council, even though we are living in a time when many within the Church seek to deny or to change certain teachings particularly with regard to marriage and family life. Catholic historical teaching and Catholic tradition are part of the roots and the foundation on which the faith is built and lived, and we ignore or discard them at our peril.

And so when you here people saying that since the Second Vatican Council the Church 'now' teaches, or 'the Church now believes' as if some new belief has been recently discovered, remember the words of St Paul to the Galatians, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a Gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema." (Galatians 1:8). Remember Christ's words in Matthew 7 and Matthew 24 where he tells us to beware of false prophets and that many false prophets *will* arise and *will* lead many astray all the while claiming to be speaking for Christ. Do not allow yourselves to be led astray. Follow the path of those who have gone before, the path of Catholic tradition and the path of Catholic historical teaching.

Satan hates children. He hates their purity and he detests their innocence because these are God like qualities. He seeks, quite successfully, to prevent their very existence through widespread contraception usage particularly amongst Catholics. When that fails he seeks to have them killed through abortion, currently reported by the World Health Organisation at 50 million per annum not counting those who are aborted through abortifacient chemicals and pills.

Those children who survive the contraception and abortion gauntlets, satan seeks to corrupt. Through their parents, or through their schools, or through false teaching from cardinals, bishops, priests, religious and teachers, or through predators of one kind or another or through a combination of these methods.

In looking at family matters and in looking at Catholic matters in Ireland some question must be asked.

"Whom do you serve?" "To whom do you answer and respond?" "God or the mass media?"

Let me be so bold as to publicly ask a controversial question concerning our children and their safety.

In Ireland, we now have very robust child protection policies in our Catholic churches. But why did these policies come about? Were they motivated by a great and deep desire to serve God better and in order to give Him greater glory and honour? Or were they motivated in response to the media exposing the appalling abuses of children by certain clerics and religious and the covering up of this abuse by certain members of the hierarchy? Why did it take this scandal becoming public in the media before robust guidelines were put in place to protect our children?

Will these policies really protect our children from predators? I don't want to knock the child protection policies but I have to say that sometimes I wonder just who is being protected. You know when you go for an operation you have to sign a declaration absolving the doctors and the hospitals of responsibility in order to protect them from being sued? Or when you see a notice on the wall of a building declaring the the owners are not responsible for what happens on their premises or in their car park. When I see the child protection policies posted in our churches and when I have to sign a book if I am in the sacristy and there are children present, I am reminded of these, liability limiting declarations. If a bishop is sued because a child is abused today, he can simply point to the guidelines that are in place and wash his hands of the matter. The guidelines will also protect the bishops and the diocese from being sued!

The reason I question this is because, as a father of eight children, I listen to Our Lord's words in the Gospel where he tells us “And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28) and I ask myself, “what about the spiritual protection of our children?” The protection of their precious souls from those that would harm them, given that the soul is more important than the body?

Should our children not also be protected from being abused by spiritual predators? If our children are being exposed to explicit sex-education programmes in so called Catholic schools, is this not an abuse of children?

If our children are being given faulty and inadequate catechesis in these same Catholic schools, is this not an abuse of children? If our children are being introduced to Buddhist meditation techniques through mindfulness programmes in these same Catholic schools which have Catholic bishops as their patrons, is this not an abuse of children? So how exactly are they being protected from abuse in these situations and why is there no robust policy within the Church in Ireland and no elaborate guidelines drawn up with compliance reports ever few years in order to protect our children from these spiritual abuses which, I would argue, are just as harmful to our children, as other types of abuse which harm both the bodies and souls of our children?

Could it be that the Irish media supports explicit sex-education in our Catholic schools? Could it be that the Irish media support mindfulness and other such programmes which undermine the Catholic faith of our children, and want them introduced into our schools? Could it be that the Irish media are not in favour of an explicit and strong identity Catholic education system for the children of Ireland?

Is this why there is no robust 'spiritual' child protection policy in Ireland to protect the faith formation of our children? I only ask the question.

Whom do you serve? To whom do you answer and respond? God or the Media?

But we parents must be very careful and avoid the snares and pitfalls of the devil.

Sometimes, in certain Catholic circles, there is a danger that we focus, not on Jesus Christ, not on the Catholic faith, but on the ministers of the faith. “Did you hear that the Pope recently said such and such!” “Bishop so and so said this!” “Why doesn't cardinal so and so publicly rebuke the Pope?” “Why isn't father so and so more forthright in defending the faith?” “Did you see what happened in that diocese last week?” “Did you see what happened in that parish?” and so on and so forth.

Now all of these may be legitimate concerns and legitimate questions but we must be careful. There is a danger that we may become bad news junkies, scouring the internet, the papers and our favourite Catholic blogs for the latest scandal. We can enter into a kind of mentality where we only see and hear the bad news and where we nurse our sense of outrage all the time and, without realising it perhaps, become self complacent and even self righteous.

We think of the Gospel story of the Pharisee and the publican, the Pharisee boasting to God about how good he is whilst the humble publican bows his head in shame and says “Lord be merciful to me a sinner”. We have to be careful that we don't become inverted publicans declaring before God “Lord, I am glad I am a humble sinner and a publican and not like that Pharisee up there boasting about how good he is.” This is a very real danger.

In Matthew chapter 7 our Lord warns us

“Judge not, that you may not be judged, For with what judgement you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? Or how sayest thou to thy brother: Let me cast the mote out of thy eye; and behold a beam is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam in thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.” (Matthew 7:1-5)

Are you sure that you would still be standing if you were judged by the same measure with which you yourself judge? I'm not!

Are we sure that we have fully removed the plank from our own eyes so that we can see the speck in our brother's eye? I know that, to my own shame, I still have a long way to go in getting this very stubborn plank out of my own eye. It is one of the reasons why I don't mention names in my articles when I am critical of what is going on within the Catholic Church that I love.

We need to focus on the deeds of men not the men of deeds remembering that in Matthew 7 Christ also tells us “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” (Matthew 7:15-16)

So yes, we must be very aware of what is going on around us and we must be wide awake to discern the fruits, but we must be sure that we are not forgetting the second part of this equation. Our Lord commands us to watch and to pray. Prayer leads us to holiness if we are docile and if we have the ears of our souls open to God, and it leads to correct action.

When we see what is going on in the world today it is important that we realise that God wills it, not for itself, but for our good. God expects something from us. We have all been born into *this* particular time by the Will of God and each one of us has a particular purpose for *this time* which will promote God's Kingdom. We must be careful that we do not get distracted from that purpose by looking around us and being forgetful of our own duties.

Apart from his eminence Cardinal Burke, there is no one else in this room who has any say over whom the next Pope will be. It is not therefore our primary concern. We must pray for our current Pope and pray for Cardinal Burke and all of the papal electors but we parents must stay focused on our own duties.

I remember when I was a young boy, there used to be these comics about world war II which always portrayed the English and American soldiers as heroes. I remember the German soldiers would say 'Achtung' and the Japanese soldiers would say 'Aieeee'!

One story from those comics has stayed with me since my childhood. It was a story about a marine on board a ship during the war. His job was to man the lifeboats. One day they were being attacked by enemy planes and during the course of the battle the gunner stationed above him was shot. He jumped up and manned the gun himself, tf tf tf tf tf, shooting down several of the enemy planes and eventually helping them to win the battle.

He was afterwards called into the captain's office and he expected to get great praise from the captain for his role in the battle. Instead, the captain rebuked him for leaving his post unattended.

A week later they were on a similar mission when once again they were attacked by enemy planes and once again the gunner stationed above him was shot. Begrudgingly, this time he stayed at his post. A few minutes later their ship was torpedoed by an enemy u-boat and they had to abandon the sinking ship. Quick as lightning he made ready the lifeboats and his speed enabled the whole crew to get to safety. Suddenly he realised, that had he gone to the gun as before, he and his shipmates would have gone down with the ship. He then understood why the captain rebuked him and he understood the importance of staying focused on one's own duty.

It is amazing how that story has stuck with me all of these years.

And so when the foundations of the family are being attacked, in an attempt to destroy them, I call out to fathers in particular to stay tuned and alert to the onerous duty that we have been given by God. Stay at your own post, which is to lead your family to heaven and to protect your family by standing in the way of harm.

Now I want to talk more directly to Fathers.

Fathers, make sure that you are fully conversant with what the Church teaches you about your role as Man, Husband and Father. Make sure that you know what is taught by Pope Pius XI in the encyclical *Casti Connubi*. Make sure that you have given your assent to the teachings of this document. Make sure that you are familiar with the writings of Pope Pius XII on marriage and family matters particularly his letters to women of 1945 and 1947 and his allocution to midwives of 1951 which teach about marriage and family. Make sure you know Blessed Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and Saint Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* and also His letter to families *Gratissimam Sane*. These are just for starters, there's also the Council of Trent, church Fathers, Pope Leo XIII's *Arcanum* and there's more.

Fathers, if you do not know these documents then how do you hope to lead your family in holiness according to the teachings of the Catholic Church contained within them?

It is not the responsibility of the bishops to get particular families right, nor the responsibility of the state. It is the responsibility of Catholic Fathers to get their Catholic family right.

With regards to the education of children, Pope St John Paul II tells us in *Familiaris Consortio*

“The Parents role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it.”

“The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others.” (FC 36)

Fathers, you are primarily responsible for ensuring the proper Catholic education of your children. If your child loses his or her faith because they attended a Catholic school that wasn't doing its job properly, don't blame the teachers, don't blame the state, don't blame the curriculum authors, don't blame the bishops. Yes, all of these may bear a certain responsibility and will be accountable to God for their failures, but as a father you have been placed at the head of your family and it is your job to make sure that the teachers, the state, the curriculum authors, and the bishops comply with your wishes regarding the children God has entrusted to you, because God, through His Catholic Church teaches, that you are the one who holds the original and primary authority in this task. It cannot be entirely delegated or replaced and you must make sure that those who do assist you, fully uphold Church teaching.

If you send your children to a school which is not doing its job or which is corrupting your children through false education, then you are responsible for the outcome. You must insist on a truly Catholic education for your children, and you must fight against any and all corruption that threatens the faith of your children. You must stand in harm's way!

Don't say that you have no choice? God does not command what is impossible. He may command what is very difficult, but He Himself tells us in Matthew chapter 6 that if we seek first His Kingdom, then He Himself will provide for all of our other needs and this includes the educational needs of our children.

For some of you this message may seem to be coming too late, the damage may already have been done. But never give up hope. Acknowledge your failures before God, repent, go to confession, and then begin again. Commit yourself once again to Our Lord and to His Catholic Church and trust in Him. In the Gospel, there are many stories told of Jesus Christ healing children and the request of their parents. The requirement was to ask in Faith. Have Faith and ask God to save your children and to bring them home if they have already strayed. If your children are still young than start taking the steps now to make sure that you are standing in harms way.

The foundation of right society is the Catholic Family, based on one man as husband and head, one woman as wife and mother co-operating in faith with her husband and under his authority, and their children.

Get the Catholic family right, and right society will follow.

We are at war, and we have an enemy who seeks to destroy us by dragging us and our children down to hell for all eternity.

In a recent Catholic Voice article I quoted from Saint Maximilian Kolbe.

“In the face of such strong attacks by the enemies of the Church of God, are we to remain inactive? Is that all we can do, complain and cry? NO! Everyone of us has a holy obligation to build a trench and personally hurl back the assaults of the enemy.”

The solution to the problems families face lies with the fathers of families building a trench in which he, with his wife and children can become holy and prosper for the Glory of God and the building of His Kingdom.

Now a trench is not a bunker, it is not a closed off mentality. A trench marks a line where a man decides he will make his stand against his enemies. For Fathers, this is the line that defends the faith of your family and you must be prepared to stand in the line defending your family and their faith or die in the attempt.

I would like to close with a quote from a new found friend of mine the Irish priest Fr William Doyle or Fr Willie as he was known and loved. Fr Doyle was a Dublin Jesuit who was killed on August 17th 1917 whilst serving as a Chaplain to the the Irish regiments under the 48th brigade in the first world war at the third battle of Ypres, in Belgium.

After his death some of his papers were published in a biography by Professor Alfred O' Rahilly. In it we find this extract from a letter giving spiritual direction to what I presume is a teacher. He says, and I'll close with this,

“I have long had the feeling that since the world is growing so rapidly worse and worse and God has lost his hold , as it were, upon the hearts of men, He is looking all the more earnestly and anxiously for big things from those who are faithful to Him still. He cannot, perhaps, gather a large army round His standard, but He wants every one in it to be a Hero, absolutely and lovingly devoted to Him; if only we could get inside the magic circle of generous souls, I believe there is no grace He would not give us to help on the work He has so much at heart, our personal sanctification. Every day you live means an infallible growth in holiness which may be multiplied a thousand times by a little generosity. When you get the chance hammer into those little flowers around you that holiness means three things: - Love, prayer, sacrifice.”

I'm John Lacken, Thanks for Listening. May God bless you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.